

signs of old age or ill health',¹ but I have failed⁶⁴³
 to find convincing evidence that any Shilluk king⁷⁸³
 was put to death in either circumstance, although¹¹⁴
 some of the kings must have qualified long before
 they died for execution on the grounds alleged; and
 I am persuaded that the story of kings being walled^[766]
 up in a hut is a confusion arising from the usual
 walling up of the remains of a dead king, the bones
 being buried after decomposition of the flesh. In the
 absence of other than traditional evidence of royal
 executions in Shilluk history and in view of the
 contradictory accounts cited I conclude that the
 ceremonial putting to death of kings is probably a
 fiction. It possibly arises from the dual personality^{[767]•}
 of the king, who is both himself and Nyikang, both
 an individual and an institution, which accounts
 also for the linguistic convention that a king does
 not die but disappears just as Nyikang is said not
 to have died but to have disappeared, in his case in
 a storm. I will return to this question of regicide
 after I have reviewed the procedures of election
 and investiture of kings to show what light they
 shed on the nature of the kingship.

¹ *Report of the Wellcome Tropical Research Laboratories*,
 p. 221; also *Pagan Tribes of the Nilotic Sudan*, pp. 90-2. Howell
 and Thomson say (*op. cit.* p. 19) that ceremonial strangulation
 is traditional for all members of the royal clan.

RELIGION

97

We have

already referred to *pan Juok* (p. 75), the country of the dead, to be reached after long wandering in the bush, but there is also a chthonic element in Shilluk ancestor worship; the spirit persists in or round the grave and may harm its living relatives, e.g. the death of a missionary's wife shortly after that of her husband was attributed to the ghost of the latter, while Hofmayr quotes a remark of the chief Yangjok to the effect that evil comes on man from below.¹ Again, the Shilluk undoubtedly fear the *cen*, the malevolent element that persists after the death of one who has died in hatred of friends or relatives, though here again the belief does not seem to bulk as largely as among the Acholi.

Offerings and sacrifice may be made to ancestors, but in our limited experience we have met with no instance that could certainly be dissociated from the cult of the royal ancestors or in which the ancestral spirits were not confused with or associated with Juok. It is true that Hofmayr describes offerings to ancestors² but his descriptions, taken for the most part from notes of colleagues, are not very convincing, as there is nothing to show that the cult of Nyakang or his descendants was specifically excluded. On the other hand he cites two short chants³ which may be regarded as evidence of prayer to the ancestors:—

tere kwaja mayagen

"The people entreat their mothers (ancestors)."

tere kwaja tiengen

"The people entreat their people (their dead)."

A hæmorrhage followed by sudden death is called "the spears of the dead", i.e. the victim has been stabbed by a ghostly weapon, but the Shilluk expression, *song tieng pa Juok*, seems to bring Juok into the matter. A more definite relation to ancestral spirits is seen in a note by Banholtzer, quoted by Hofmayr,⁴ to the effect that warriors obtained the services of an *ajuago* to invoke their ancestors, that the spirits of the slain may be harmless. A sheep is killed and part of the viscera placed in a pot and buried as an offering to those in the underworld.⁵

¹ Op. cit., 230.

² Op. cit., 229.

³ Op. cit., 230.

⁴ Loc. cit.

⁵ Oyster records that many Shilluk "take an offering of the first fruits to the grave of an ancestor, usually the father. . . . The grain is made into a sort of batter and poured out on the grave. The man then says that he has given his father a taste" ("Nikawag's place in the Shilluk Religion": *S.N. & R.*, i, 1918, 286). But in another passage Oyster clearly shows an association of the ancestral spirit with Juok (for we assume that "God" is a translation of "Juok"): ". . . When prayer is to be offered to the spirit of a dead person, a female sheep is brought to the grave. If the person making the prayer is not the son of the

XL

Introduction

776

[761]

[576]

[753]

latter; when a person is ill, they may say: *gi jwok* "Why, Jwok?" The sudden and violent death of a man is regarded as being caused by Jwok. But I do not think there is any ethical motive in our sense underlying this belief; Jwok has simply killed the man for having offended him, probably without knowing it. The name of Jwok is used in a favourable sense in the following phrases of salutation: when a person arrives, he is saluted: *gi kgi jwok* "you have brought Jwok"; to one starting on a journey they say: *gi wite jwok* "you may hold fast Jwok". — Jwok has also the meaning of "sickness"; the reason for this is the conviction that Jwok is the cause of sickness; "he is sick", they express by "he has Jwok", "Jwok is upon him".

Although the Shilluk does certainly not connect with the word Jwok the same notion as we do with "God", Jwok is doubtless the only word fit for being used in the Christian sense. It is true the word occurs in stories in rather a disrespectful sense, any being with more than natural powers being called a Jwok; but this is so in analogous cases with many African peoples, and will almost always be so in heathen languages; it can therefore not form a real obstacle for using the word in Christian preaching and literature.

[In older literature the name Kelge appears as that of the "creator of the Shilluks." I have never heard this name].

[114]

773

NYIKANG, AND
THE ORIGIN
OF THE
SHILLUKS

The tradition on the origin of man or rather of the Shilluks leads to the second and most important part of the religious practice of the people, viz. the worship of Nyikang. This tradition runs thus: A white or rather greyish cow, *geon aduk*, came out of the river; she brought forth a gourd; when this gourd split, a man and animals came forth out of it (vide page 178). The name of this man was *Kelge*; *Kelge* begat *Omara*, who begat *Wat Mgi* ("son of *Mgi*"); *Wat Mgi* begat *Okwa*. *Okwa* used to go to the riverside; here he met repeatedly two maidens who had come from out the water, they were very beautiful and had long hair, but the lower part of their bodies was like the form of a crocodile. One day *Okwa* seized the girls and carried them away. Their screams brought out their father, who till then had not been seen by *Okwa*. His face and the left side of his body were like human, but his right side was green of colour and had the form of a crocodile. When asked he declared his name to be *Odiijil*, he protested against his daughters being taken away by force, but afterwards consented. *Okwa* married the girls. The names of the two maidens were *Nyakayo* and *Ongwat* (*Nakayo* and *Ongwat*). One of *Nyakayo*'s sons was *Nyikang*; according to some this was the eldest child, while others say he was the youngest. *Nyakayo* had more children beside *Nyikang*; of one son the name is known, he was *Ongi*; the names of her daughters are (according to A. E. S.) *Ad Dai*, *Ari Unkar*, and *Buryung*. *Okwa*'s second wife *Ongwat* gave birth to one son, *Ju* or *Buog*. *Okwa* married

626 If you walk with a person who has the evil eye, let him walk in front,
751 for if you go in front you give him a good chance to cast the evil eye on you.

754 When a person with the evil eye begs from you, grant his request, because when he accepts your present his power over you is broken, and he can not injure you. He may regain his power if he comes again and is refused, for if you refuse him, he becomes angry and casts the evil eye on you.

When eating, let the oldest of the party take the food first, so that if the evil eye has fallen on the food he may detect it, and the food can be cleansed.

When eating with a man who has the evil eye, do not eat much or he will kill you.

When you are angry at a certain village, do not enter that village or you will get the evil eye.

Do not speak harshly to a man who has the evil eye, or he will cast the spell on you.

754 Once a man gave his daughter to the king to be his wife. The girl had the evil eye, and when the king learned that fact, he gave the woman to another man lest she kill his other wives.

At the present time a chief is suffering from the evil eye. The people of another village had stolen his cow. He went to the village in anger, and talked harshly. While there he felt a chill run through his body. He went home, and took sick. His body has sores on it that have come from the evil eye.

The man with the power to cast the evil eye is feared by the people, but he is not feared as much as the evil medicine man. When he causes death, it is usually sudden, though it may be lingering. When a person [761] with the evil eye dies, the people of the village rejoice, though they do not show their joy openly.

The possessors of the evil eye are deceived even as the people who fear them. They go through life apart from their fellow men in many respects. They believe in their own evil powers, and while their claims sound childish to us, yet we must consider the fact that the history of the English speaking world reveals the fact that our ancestors were afraid of witches, even after they had reached a much greater development than the Shilluk has attained.

SHILLUK NOTES

59

When someone has been stunned by lightning, the proper treatment is for two men to take the patient by the heels and, with his head hanging down, to dip his head in water. He is then taken from the water, but continues to hang head downward. After he has been held in this position for some time, snails and frogs will pour out of his mouth, and he will then be restored to health. One man assured me that he had once seen the frogs and snails come from a patient. 752 821

When a person is killed by lightning he is not buried as other men. If his death occurs in a house the walls are pushed down over him, and form his grave. If he is killed out in the open, each person in the village is supposed to bring a bit of earth and throw on him, and thus the grave is formed. It is thought that anyone who refuses to do that will be struck by lightning. 766 821

The person who is killed by lightning is not mourned as other people. The ox that is killed immediately after his death is looked upon as an offering to Deñ rather than as a sacrifice for the dead. The relatives are not to weep for them as they do for those taken by disease. The thought seems to be that the man who is struck by lightning is called by Deñ, and that it is an honour to be called by Deñ, and that weeping and lamenting over such a death would be dishonouring to Deñ. Death by lightning is looked upon as bad, but not as bad as death that comes through disease. The family of the deceased is supposed to be prospered. They feel that the family has made an offering to the higher powers, and they in turn should be blessed by the higher powers for the offering they have made. 782 761 821

When a house is struck by lightning the war cry is given. The men all run to the river with the tips of their spears pointing upward. The spears are waved in imitation of the lightning. This is done so that Deñ will fear and return to the upper regions. Then they run to the boat landing where they throw their spears on the ground. Then each man cuts a bit of green grass. He carries this grass to the fire and throws it on the blaze. Occasionally, instead of running to the river in that manner, they run to the fire with their hands raised as if in supplication, and they give the war cry as they run. 787 821

A day or two after the fire, as soon as the walls are cooled, the people assemble. If no one has been killed in the house, a sheep is killed and cooked and beer is made. After the sheep is cooked, bits are cut from 342 782 821

God. Why do you leave the responsibility of saving on God alone? God's spirit becomes tired (from work), and he leaves people, and they die. Why do you not see and save us? You went to the ground, and you have forgotten that a person from another house does not guard yours.

The prayer is continued in this strain until the sheep, responding to the necessity of nature, relieves itself, and that is taken as an omen that the prayer has been heard, and a favourable answer will be given. That which comes from the sheep is put on the grave. If the omen is delayed, the sheep may be taken to a house, and left there to be brought out another day. The prayer life among the Shilluks is developed by adversity, as they seldom if ever pray, when in prosperous circumstances.

Their veneration of Nikawng does not blind their eyes to his faults. When a prayer has been offered to Nikawng, and the answer is not given as had been hoped, the disappointed one curses Nikawng. That is true especially in the case of death. When death is approaching, they sacrifice to Nikawng and God, and pray that death may be averted. If the death occurs the bereaved ones curse Nikawng, because he did not exert himself in their behalf. Apparently they do not pray to him that the condition of the deceased may be happy after death. He is sometimes spoken of as the son of God, but it is not definite, as they also use the same term in regard to his father, and one or two others.

They maintain that Nikawng still lives. He is even now watching over the Shilluks, and should he die the whole race would die, but in spite of their belief they have a sacred house for Nikawng, which is similar to the sacred houses in which the later kings have been buried. This fact weakens their statement that they believe that he still lives.

The departed leader comes back to his country on certain occasions. At night he can be heard in the sacred house, which has been dedicated to him. He sharpens his spear, or beats with his club, but when the attendants enter the house, no visible form is to be seen, but they know that the sounds were made by him. He may also ring a bell that is in the sacred house. When he is heard in the sacred house, the Shilluks say: "Nikawng walks in his country". They rejoice because it is an indication that he is actively watching over his people.

When the rains do not begin as soon as the natives think they should,

776
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782

755 to keep the disease from entering. The mother is warned against looking back.

[753] When a child cries persistently, with no apparent cause, they reach the conclusion that he is being drawn by one of the kings. The servant of the king is called, and given a fee of a sheep. The parents say they want to know, who is drawing the child. The first thing to do is to take cowrie shells, and string beads on them. Each shell has a different coloured bead. The shells are named for their kings, and also for the deceased grandparents of the child. One shell is also put in for the child. The shells are

[787] all taken in the hand, and thrown out on a skin. When they fall if another shell touches that belonging to the child, it is being drawn by the spirit of that king or person. The child is then given the name of the person

[553] drawing it, and a cure is effected. If at the first attempt no one is indicated the test is repeated until some one is indicated. All the people in the room

[782] then cower, and pray to the drawing spirit as the leader directs.

The servants of the king claim the power to converse with the dead.

756 When a spirit is to be called the medium goes into the house with the relatives. She goes to one corner of the room and retires behind a screen.

787 The door is closed to make the room dark. She then takes a gourd with some grain in it and twirls it to make a noise that will call the spirit of the departed. The spirit of the king then takes powerful possession of the medium, and she speaks in a peculiar voice. The usual thing is for the spirit to greet the assembled people, and they reply. The spirit then says:

• [761] "Where I am it is nice, but I was killed by a certain person (naming him) or I would not have died." The death was caused by a charm cast on the victim. "I will kill that man, do not quarrel with him. When I finish

[682] greeting you I will return." Sometimes such a message causes the relatives of the deceased to try to kill the one who cast the charm.

An instance of their working is often given in this community. Two men made a trip to the Nuer country. On the return trip one of them, 756 named Shol, was separated from his companion. The other man concluded 766 that he had been killed by a lion, and returned with that report. The people of the village mourned him as dead, but they waited two months. Then a servant of the king was called. She went through the usual forms, and then exclaimed: "Ah the man". The spirit greeted the people, and

763 sound that is prolonged for about ten minutes and is renewed at intervals during the day as relatives or friends of the deceased arrive for the funeral.

[166] I have said previously that the Shilluk are fond of wandering from their own villages. They will settle and live for years at the other end of the country, perhaps among the people of another tribe or in another province. But no matter how long a man has been away from his own people, he will always endeavour to return to die among them, and if he should fall ill whilst away from home he will try to let his kinsfolk know in order that they may come and fetch him, or will have himself carried back. If, however, he should die

766 away from home the news of his death is greeted with the customary wailing, and some member of his family must visit his grave and bring back some of the earth from it; this is buried near the dead man's home and the funeral ceremonies are enacted over it as though the corpse itself were present.

761 It is the Shilluk tradition that the king should not be
682 permitted to die a natural death, but should be ceremoni-
[643] ously smothered by his womenfolk. The same is true of a chief, but whether the reasons for the killing in this case are the same as those which decide the death of the king is not clear. Certainly a chief who had been ill for a month and showed no signs of recovery would be speedily put out of the way.

[888] The custom seems to extend to other cases too; an old man would be smothered as also would be one suffering from a long and painful illness, and the same is done too, in some cases at least, shortly before death would take place naturally. I myself saw a dying boy being smothered by his own mother. She propped him up between her knees and passed her hand over his nose and mouth. I thought that she was wiping away the mucus that was coming from his nose and mouth, and it was only when he had ceased to breathe that I realized to my horror that she had killed him. When questioned about the reasons for this 'mercy' killing the Shilluk are vague and evasive. They say, for instance, that it is a humiliation for anyone to die naturally.

How the Faith came to the Shilluk

109

convert him. In Detwok he acted as cook, and one day the native boy who helped him came to Father Beduschi and said that Brother must have leprosy because he picked up very hot things without feeling anything. It was true, and the Brother lived the rest of his saintly life in a leper colony, which he called his parish.

In 1925 the Sisters arrived from Lul to take possession of the huts which had been built for them. Matters progressed slowly, but the years 1931 and 1932 seemed to see an awakening of interest among the Shilluk in matters of religion. This did not last, but the missionaries found it necessary to build a new church as the original mud building was not large enough for the congregation. They taught the natives how to make bricks and cement and how to build.

During the making of the bricks for this church an accident occurred which nearly resulted in the closing of the mission. On April 1st, 1931, some youths and girls were carrying bricks out of the kiln, singing and pushing one another as they worked. Suddenly the whole pile collapsed, burying three girls and two boys. Some women who were going for water gave the alarm and soon the compound was full of frantic natives all shouting agreement with the chief who said: 'You see what happens when you allow your children to work for the foreigners.' They ran shrieking when a Father or Sister managed to extricate one of the victims, but none of them would help to carry out the dying children.

The three girls died immediately and one of the boys a week later. Papiti, the king, was soon on the spot and held a conference with his chiefs, all but two of whom were clamouring for the expulsion of the missionaries. The king listened to their speeches and then rose to speak himself. 'Is not this a thing permitted by God?' he asked. 'Did the foreigners do it deliberately? If a crocodile takes one of our young men, on whom do we take revenge? Is this not an accident, too? Have not the foreigners helped us often? Who take care of our sick? Is not this permitted by God?' The chiefs rose:

'You have spoken well,' they said, 'let us go.' The mission

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